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7 August 1978

MEMORANDUM FOR: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

FROM: Director of Central Intelligence

SUBJECT: NIE [ ] IRAN: PROSPECTS THROUGH 1985

REFERENCE: Memo for DCI from NIO/NE&SA, dated 3 August 1978,  
Same Subject

1. I have had only a passing opportunity to review NIE [ ] (1 August 1978 draft). I am concerned with both the number of specific points and the general philosophy behind the study. 25X1

2. Specifically:

a. I seriously question the estimate on the bottom of page 6 that the Iranians could fight a delaying action against the Soviets until Western support could arrive. It seems to me it would take a very long time for any significant Western support to arrive. I also happen to think that if the Soviets chose to make a drive for the Persian Gulf they would do a right hook through Turkey, coming down on Iran from the northwest rather than the north. Thus the time from the initial assault into Iran until capture of the vital areas where the oil fields are could be less than if they made a direct assault. Moreover, this and a number of other judgments in the paper seem to come almost out of thin air. I hope there is some backup analysis for this.

b. I believe the issue of personnel requirements for the military is somewhat confused. We say they will have enough to absorb the equipment but not enough to maintain it. There are no statistics at all, however, as to what this means in numbers, what the resource base of moderately educated Iranians is, or any other data to support this conclusion. In addition, I'm not sure that it is a really meaningful conclusion unless we believe that all of the maintenance can be taken over by foreign contract personnel. If "absorbing" an F-14 means you have a pilot and radar operator trained for it but can't keep the plane flying, I question how meaningful that "absorption" is. Moreover, in areas like naval ships, contractor personnel aren't a very meaningful substitute unless they are prepared to go to sea and engage in combat. Beyond this I question, based only on gut reaction, whether they really will have enough trained personnel just to man the new equipment. 25X1

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c. I am working on only a small sample but I question the statement at the bottom of page 94 that the Iranian military personnel often have to be trained in English. I once visited the technical training facilities of the Iranian navy and that was not the case at all there. The U.S. lectures and manuals were all translated into Farsi. (I don't question that that still leaves a major problem since the manuals written by the USN were generally unintelligible in English and must have suffered much in translation to Farsi.)

d. My acquaintance with the Iranians indicated that there is already a severe personnel problem in the economic sector. This is not mentioned. The increase in the size of the armed forces' requirements for technically trained people is bound to aggravate this.

2. My overall reaction from reading primarily the principal judgments is to question whether this is what we want to produce as an NIE--a series of rather categoric statements of outcome. I don't get much flavor as to what factors will drive the conclusions that you come to or prove them invalid. Hence I have no way of applying independent judgment to your judgments, nor any way of measuring as time goes by whether events are moving in the directions you have predicted or not. What I would like to have seen is a statement of the forces which are likely to bring Crown Prince Reza into authority if his father dies along side those that would push events in the opposite direction, along with your estimate of the forces for Reza which prevail. There is a very little bit of this on the top of page 19 but only that explication which supports your thesis. There is no way to put this into perspective and surely we have some hesitancy as to the accuracy of this prognostication. This question I raise is a much broader one for NIEs in general; it is far too late to attempt to rework this estimate. Please look at the specifics I have listed above and let's talk about the basic approach to estimates.

*To ES for signature*

STANSFIELD TURNER

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